

**“An Immoral, Disliked, Religiously Confused Woman”** 5/2/10 9 & 10:45 am  
John 4:1-42

Series, “*Ambassador to ...*”

## **INTRODUCTION**

When I was in college and a new believer, there was a particular classmate I got to know. I didn't get to know her very well, and we didn't have much in common. This was in the mid-70s and she had a heavy 1960s hang-over. The way she dressed, talked, looked – even then she didn't fit the mold of the average student at Arizona State.

God opened the doors for me to share about Jesus with her and she seemed somewhat interested. I invited her to come to church with me and she agreed.

I took her on Sunday mornings a few times; she didn't have a car. She seemed interested in continuing to come, but I sensed she was starting to like me in a boyfriend-girlfriend kind-of-way. I wasn't interested in that. I was concerned for her soul.

So, one Sunday morning I was standing around with some of the other college-aged students at the church, and asked if one of girls would be willing to bring her.

I only remember one response. It went something like this: “*I'm not going to drive into Tempe to bring your whore to church.*”

I was stunned. I knew it would be inconvenient for someone to give her a ride but I was shocked to hear that kind of response from someone who said they knew Jesus.

*But, you know what was worse?* I let that influence me. I felt caught between a rock and a hard place because I didn't want to encourage her feelings towards me, but I didn't try to find someone else, maybe on campus, who would reach out to her. I quit taking her to church and tried to be kind, but things were not the same after that.

God calls us to be Jesus Christ to the people of this world, regardless of their situation in life, and because of their situations. We are Christ's Ambassadors.

Jesus never saw anyone as hopeless or beyond rescue. In fact, as we're going to see this morning, where some saw nothing but wasted, hopeless lives, Jesus saw people ready to receive the love and forgiveness of God!

**OPEN** to John 4:4 (**PAGE** 1651)

**READ** John 4:4 “**Now He had to go through Samaria.**”

“had to” “δεῖ□ *it is necessary, one must or has to.* (BAG)

Why did Jesus have to go through Samaria? Was it the roads?

There were two routes to Galilee from Jerusalem. One went directly north through the heart of Samaria. Most “good” Jews would never take this route. They so despised the Samaritans that they didn’t even want the dust from their land on their feet.

The other route was north and east, almost entirely avoiding Samaria. It was longer, but this way the Jews stayed “clean.”

Did Jesus go directly through the heart of Samaria because it was the shortest route to Galilee? It was the shortest route, but that isn’t why **He had to go through.**

As we move through the story, we will see these two reasons Jesus had to go through Samaria:

*He had to go because:*

- 1) There were many people in Samaria ready to put their faith in Jesus as Messiah. (v. 7-30, 39-42)
- 2) To show His disciples that the Good News was for everyone, and that Samaritans were ready and eager to respond. (v. 27, 31-38)

*To be Jesus’ Ambassador ...*

**I. Share Grace and Truth with Every Person** (John 4:5-30, 39-42)

**READ** John 4:5-26

*As Jesus first met this woman, she had a lot going against her:*

A. Ethnic minority: Samaritan (v. 7)

There had been about 1,000 years of animosity, war and hatred between the Jews and the Samaritans:

- under King Jeroboam, 10 of the 12 tribes of Israel split from the rest of Israel. The 10 tribes became known as “Israel” or the Northern Kingdom, and the two tribes as “Judah” or the Southern Kingdom.

- Almost immediately Israel began worshipping idols. After about two hundred years of warnings, God sent the Assyrians to punish them. They captured most of them, took them to Assyria, and then put people from other nations in Israel. These foreigners mixed with Israelites who the Assyrians left behind, both in marriage and religion. These people became known as the Samaritans, named for the city and region they were in.

So the **Samaritans** were *racially mixed* and their *religion* was a blend of Judaism and false religions.

And this made them absolutely detestable to the Jews.

#### B. A Woman: second-class human being socially and relationally (v. 7)

Let me try to give you a feel for what it was like for women at this time:

In the **Talmud**, writings of Jewish rabbis, we read, "*It is forbidden for dogs, women or palm trees to pass between two men.*"

A daily prayer from the Talmud: "*Thank you God for not making me a Gentile, a woman or a slave.*"

Now, after watching Sharon deliver four babies, I thanked God I wasn't a woman but this isn't what the Pharisees meant!

A husband could divorce his wife for any reason, but a woman could not divorce her husband.

"A Rabbinic law of A.D. 66 stated that Samaritan women were considered as continually ... unclean. So, a Jew who drank from a Samaritan woman's cup would become ceremonially unclean." (NIVAC)

"A Jewish Rabbi would rather go thirsty than violate these" social rules. (BKC)

Jesus is breaking all kinds of important social protocols in merely talking with this woman. *But He doesn't care.* As God's Ambassador, He represents God's character; God is love. And when He has to choose between honoring social standards and honoring God, God wins.

#### C. Marked by a lifestyle of broken relationships (v. 16-18)

She is living with a man, and prior to this, she has been married and divorced five times. Just like now, that was a lot of divorces.

And even though the Samaritans did not worship the true God of the Bible, they did not accept people living together outside of marriage.

#### D. Disliked and ostracized due to her lifestyle (v. 6)

Verse 6 says it was **the sixth hour** when the woman came to draw water. That was 12 noon.

(1) In this culture water collection was a responsibility of women. In a world that isolated women socially, this task became an opportunity for women to meet and talk.

(2) Usually, water-drawing took place either in the early morning or at dusk in order to avoid the desert heat.

So, why was she drawing water at noon, and not enjoying the company of the other women?

It was *likely* because the other women didn't want her around due to her reputation. They didn't want to associate with someone who was openly living in violation of their religious and social laws.

#### E. Misinformed and confused religiously (v. 19-26)

The Samaritans' religious practices were a mix of Jewish and pagan religions.

They set up their own place of worship in spite of God commanding that sacrifices were to be offered only in the Jerusalem temple.

This was the point the woman brought up in v. 20, as a point of division between Jews and Samaritans.

Jesus tells her that the day was coming when neither the Jewish temple nor the Samaritan temple would be important ... not location of worship, but Holy-Spirit-led worship through the temple of every believer's heart. Believers in Jesus Christ would be the dwelling place of God, the temples of God!

She didn't get it, so she replied, in v. 25: **“I know that Messiah’ (called Christ) ‘is coming. When He comes, He will explain everything to us.”**

In spite of her lifestyle and her religious confusion, she is hanging on to the hope that one day Messiah will come, and He will make everything clear. There is a longing in her heart that one day everything will be clear, everything will be OK.

Who would have guessed that she had that inside of her?

Someone has said, *“Prejudice is a great time saver. It allows us to form opinions without having to know the facts.”*

And then, she had the shock of her life:

v. 26: **“Then Jesus declared, ‘I Who speak to you am He.’”**

Her *hope* has come to be!

**READ** John 4:28-29 **“Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people,  
29 ‘Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?’**

And, as a result of telling her town about Jesus, and then Jesus spending two days with them, they all believe in Jesus ... that He is **the Savior of the world**.

*To be Jesus’ Ambassador ... I. Share Grace and Truth with Every Person* (John 4:5-30, 39-42)

*To be Jesus’ Ambassador ...*

**II. See Every Person Through Jesus’ Eyes** (John 4:27, 31-36)

**READ** John 4:27, 31-36 **“Just then His disciples returned and were surprised to find Him talking with a woman. But no one asked, ‘What do you want?’ or ‘Why are You talking with her?’**

31 **Meanwhile His disciples urged Him, ‘Rabbi, eat something.’**

32 **But He said to them, ‘I have food to eat that you know nothing about.’**

33 **Then His disciples said to each other, ‘Could someone have brought Him food?’**

34 **‘My food,’ said Jesus, ‘is to do the will of Him Who sent Me and to finish His work.**

35 **Do you not say, ‘Four months more and then the harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.**

36a **Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life ...”**

Jesus is teaching His disciples that they need to see people through His eyes, with God’s eyes.

Through their world-tainted lenses they are seeing despised, low-class, messed-up people, who have no interest in the true God. The disciples are a perfect reflection of the society in which they have lived their entire lives.

And they can justify, point-by-point, why they are right in holding their opinions.

Jesus was raised in the same culture for more than 30 years. But He is seeing through His Father's eyes. And what He sees is lost people ready to say "yes" to God and to Himself.

It can be very difficult to break the cycle of seeing people who are caught in sin through the eyes of Jesus.

This has been a challenge in every generation ...

### **ILLUSTRATION**

William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, spoke to this in 1910.

After describing some of the devastating social ills of his day ... vast unemployment, homelessness, children suffering from hunger, prostitution, some of the effects of alcoholism on families, he says these words,

"Brought it all on themselves you say? Perhaps so. But that does not excuse our (not) assisting them.

"You don't demand a certificate of virtue before you drag some drowning creature out of the water. Nor the assurance (of repentance from) a man of faded grace before you deliver him from the burning building.

"But what shall we do? Content ourselves by singing a hymn? Offering a prayer? Or giving a little good advice? No! Ten thousand times NO! We will forgive them! Feed them! Reclaim them! Employ them! Perhaps we will fail with many. Quite likely. But our business is to help them all the same."

He calls us to love the unlovable, to help the helpless, to BE Christ. "**Be merciful to those who doubt. Snatch them from the fire and SAVE them.**" Jude 1:22-23.

Jesus "***had* to go through Samaria ...**"

1) There were many people in Samaria ready to put their faith in Jesus as Messiah. (v. 7-30, 39-42)

2) To show His disciples that the Good News was for everyone, and that Samaritans were ready and eager to respond. (v. 27, 31-38)

Where is your Samaria? What constitutes a Samaritan for you?

Are there social “rules” you need to break out of in order to seek lost people and share the grace and truth of Jesus?

## **CONCLUSION**

Maybe you would say, “I’m that woman,” or “I’m a man who is far outside the forgiveness of God.”

In a very real sense, “It doesn’t matter where you’ve been, it only matters where you are going.” ~ Brian Tracy

The scars you bear tell of your past, but scars don’t have to control your future.

Jesus did not come to condemn us, He came to rescue us! As He hung on the cross He saw your face, and He loved you. That’s why He died – to rescue us from the eternal penalty of our sins – because we cannot rescue ourselves.

Will you open your heart to Jesus and ask Him to forgive you and restore you and accept you? He will if you will surrender to Him!

*“Father in Heaven, I need You. Please forgive me for what I have said and done that is so far from what You desire and so far from that for which You created me. I surrender my life to You. Please use me as Your ambassador, to take your love and Your message to everyone. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”*